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DISCUSSION AND CORRESPONDENCE

ANCIENT LODGE SITES ON THE MISSOURI IN NEBRASKA

WITHIN the last few years several papers¹ have been published by Mr R. F. Gilder of Omaha on prehistoric earth lodges in eastern Nebraska. Under the auspices of the Peabody Museum of Harvard University I have been investigating several of these lodge sites during the last three years and have covered a territory somewhat wider than that in which Mr Gilder did most of his work. In addition, several of the sites excavated were more favorable for the observation of certain features than those in which Mr Gilder worked. These facts furnish the excuse for the present notice.

The principal feature in which my conclusions differ from those of Mr Gilder, as published in 1909,² is in the construction of the houses, and it is to this feature that I wish to call attention at the present time. In fairness to Mr Gilder, it should be stated that he has been convinced by his own later investigations³ of the correctness of my conclusions.

These lodge sites are now known to occur as far south as Union, Nebraska, and as far north as Walthill in the same state—a distance exceeding one hundred miles. At White Cloud, Kansas, there are sites which seem to be of the same type but which have not yet been investigated. The Museum expedition of the coming summer will excavate some of these and also some sites in northern Missouri. The type of lodge site here described has not been proved to exist east of the Missouri river, although several have been reported which are probably similar.

Of the five hundred or more known sites, all but four are situated either on the very tops of the highest bluffs or on the highest river terraces near their steep fronts. The spot chosen was usually one from which water would drain away on every side. Not a single site is known to exist more than three miles from the river bottoms, and very few more than half a mile away. The distance from the river to which they extend seems to be determined by the presence or absence of certain Pleistocene

¹ *American Anthropologist*, IX, pp. 702-719; XI, pp. 56-84. *Records of the Past*, X, pp. 249-259; XII, pp. 107-116.

² Excavation of Earth-lodge Ruins in Eastern Nebraska, *American Anthropologist*, 1909, XI, pp. 56-84.

³ *Records of the Past*, XII, pp. 107-116.

gravels which are the source of all the springs of the region. Where these outcrop to a considerable distance from the river, the sites likewise so extend; and conversely where the outcrops do not occur, there are no sites. The few sites not on the ridges are near springs.

With reference to each other, these sites are much scattered. Seldom are more than two or three close together, and sites isolated a mile or two from any other occur. Usually they are strung out along the ridges a hundred or more yards apart. I have been unable to discover any traces of village grouping. Indeed, on the river terraces where definite village arrangement would be likely, they are still stretched out in a long line. This would seem to indicate that the builders were originally dwellers on the ridges and occupied the terraces only at a later date. However I have been unable so far to see any difference in culture between the sites on the bluffs and those on the terraces.

The sites themselves appear on the surface of the ground as "saucer-like" depressions which are often called "buffalo wallows" by persons living in their neighborhood, and "circles" by those who know their real nature. They vary from a few inches to more than four feet in depth below the surrounding ground level. On excavation it is found that the actual house occupied but a portion of this depression, the remainder being due to surface wash.

The actual lodge was not round, like the earth lodges of the historical tribes of the Missouri valley, but roughly rectangular or very nearly square. They measure from 35 to 40 feet to the side. The corners are somewhat rounded, but for at least 30 feet the walls are perfectly straight. In many of the houses the walls have been burned to a brick-red, so that this rectangular outline can be traced with absolute certainty. Indeed, after my experience I can trace on the ground the position of the straight walls in many sites and not miss them by more than a few inches, in spite of the rounded appearance of the depressed area.

The depth to which the original excavation of the house was carried is from three to four feet below the present depressed portion of the ground. This depression is now filled with from 15 to 20 inches of material which must have collected on the floor of the lodge while it was occupied, 9 to 15 inches representing the fallen roof, and over this 12 to 15 inches of accumulated black soil. Below the floor proper and near the walls, pits or caches were dug—some as much as six feet below the floor level. These number from two or three up to 20 in a single house, and in general are somewhat bottle-shaped. Their sides are often burned, and they are frequently filled with a mixture of charcoal, ashes, and clay. Often they

are nothing more than rubbish pits, but some of them were used for storage.

There was a principal fireplace always in the center of the floor, but there were also smaller ones elsewhere. Indeed it seems that at one time or another nearly every part of the floor was so used. There does not seem to have been any excavation for the fireplace as is usual in the lodges of the Missouri river tribes.

A feature of special interest is the entrance passage. This occurs in only a portion of the lodges, the others apparently having been entered by a ladder. Where such an entrance occurs it is quite long, sometimes extending as far as 20 to 25 feet beyond the edge of the house. Its direction is not constant, but it seems to be determined by the prevailing winds and the slope of the hill. None open to the north or northwest. It has another peculiarity in that it is not inclined, as are the passageways in the lodges of the historical tribes, but is almost level. It is continued to such a distance that the natural slope of the hill will bring it to the ground level. The houses are not orientated.

The culture has been sufficiently described for the present in the papers of Mr Gilder, and only one or two points will be noted here. Of the food material, there are considerable quantities of charred grain and nuts, abundant bones of rodents and deer, but, except as implements, the bones of the bison are quite rare—a rather unusual feature for a Plains culture. The pottery shows a distinct development from north to south which will be described in a later paper. A few pieces were found which were definitely the result of trade—probably from the Red river region in Louisiana. There is no sign of contact with the white race.

The connection of these people with known tribes has yet to be determined, but it is certain that they were not Omaha nor Oto. On the present evidence, Catlin's theory of a Mandan origin can be regarded only as a myth. There are many reasons for believing they were not Pawnee nor Arikara.

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THE RED-PAINT PEOPLE OF MAINE

IN the *American Anthropologist* for January-March, 1913, Professor Warren K. Moorehead describes his archeological research in Maine and tells of what he calls the "Red-paint People," whose remains were discovered there. Excepting the strange remains of the cave-people of the Ozark mountains (which also were investigated by Professor Moorehead),